

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2140

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 105

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BTRA, OVIP, US, SY, LE

SUBJECT: TIME MIDEAST "NEWSTOUR" FOR BUSINESS LEADERS -- POSSIBLE
ARAFAT MEETING

REF: DAMASCUS 3039

1. MISSION HAS DISCUSSED CONTENTS OF REFTEL WITH TIME-BEIRUT
CORRESPONDENT WILLIAM STEWART, UNDER WHOSE SUPERVISION LOUIS
FARES ACTS FOR TIME. STEWART WISHES MAKE FOLLOWING POINTS
CLARIFY FARES' STATEMENTS TO EMBASSY DAMASCUS.
2. TIME-BEIRUT IS, AT TIME-NEW YORK'S DIRECTION, ATTEMPTING
TO SET UP "NEWSTOUR" MEETING WITH ARAFAT. IT IS WORKING PRIMARILY
THROUGH SHAFIQ AL-HOUT, PLO-BEIRUT OFFICE DIRECTOR, AT THIS STAGE,
ALTHOUGH IT HAS ALSO ASKED LOUIS FARES TO FEEL SARG OUT ON WHETHER
IT COULD BE OF ANY ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING MEETING. AS MATTERS
STAND, TIME HAS ARAFAT'S AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE, BUT NO
TIME OR PLACE HAS BEEN SET.
3. TIME-BEIRUT'S ORIGINAL SCENARIO WAS TO HAVE MEETING IN
REFUGEE CAMP IN OR AROUND BEIRUT. SECURITY PROBLEMS FOR BOTH
ARAFAT AND "NEWSTOUR" PARTICIPANTS, AS WELL AS LEBANESE SENSITIVITIES
,
HAVE LED IT TO FAVOR SECOND SCENARIO OF MEETING IN DAMASCUS.
THIS, IN ITS VIEW, WOULD PRESENT FEWER SECURITY PROBLEMS AND PROVE
LESS SENSITIVE TO HOST GOVERNMENT. IN FACT, TIME-BEIRUT MAY ASK
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SARG TO "INVITE" ARAFAT TO DAMASCUS FOR "NEWSTOUR" MEETING IF

CURRENT PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS WITH PLO IN BEIRUT AND SARG IN DAMASCUS INDICATE THIS TO BE DESIRABLE. FYI, ALTHOUGH TIME-BEIRUT HAS INFORMED MIDDLE-LEVEL GOL OFFICIALS OF POSSIBLE MEETING WITH ARAFAT, LEBANESE HAVE NOT YET OPENLY EXPRESSED ANY RESERVATIONS. TIME-BEIRUT REALIZES THAT INCREASINGLY OPEN RESERVATIONS COULD CERTAINLY BE EXPECTED, BUT, UNLESS FARES HAS DIRECT LINE TO PRESIDENT FRANJIEH, TIME-BEIRUT BELIEVES HE IS SPEAKING OUT OF TURN.

4. IN ANY CASE, DAMASCUS SCHEDULE STILL FLEXIBLE. IN EVENT ARAFAT MEETING DOES TAKE PLACE IN DAMASCUS, IT HAS NEVER BEEN INTENT OF TIME-BEIRUT TO ATTEMPT INTRODUCE ARAFAT INTO PUBLIC EVENT INCLUDING SARG AND EMBASSY REPS. IT WOULD PLAN INSTEAD TO ARRANGE PRIVATE AFTERNOON MEETING, PERHAPS UNDER SARG AUSPICES AS INDICATED ABOVE, DURING TIME PROPOSED FOR SIGHTSEEING AND SHOPPING. OF COURSE, IF SARG PICKS UP BALL AND RUNS WITH IT, TIME-BEIRUT CANNOT GUARANTEE WHERE ARAFAT MIGHT POP UP BUT WOULD DO ITS BEST TO GIVE EMBASSY ADVANCE NOTICE.

5. STEWART WISHES EMBASSY DAMASCUS TO UNDERSTAND THAT, WHEN IT COMES TO TIME INC. MATTERS, FARES OPERATES ONLY ON TIME-BEIRUT'S INSTRUCTIONS, ALTHOUGH HE MAY SOMETIMES LEAD ONE TO BELIEVE OTHERWISE. HE IS CURRENTLY UNDER INSTRUCTIONS FROM STEWART NOT TO DISCUSS "NEWSTOUR" WITH ANY PLO REPS IN DAMASCUS INDEPENDENTLY OR PRIOR TO CONCLUSION OF TIME-PLO CONTACTS IN BEIRUT.
GODLEY

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